

REMARKS

Applicants acknowledge receipt of the Office Action dated September 26, 2008. In that action, the Examiner: (1) objected to the specification; (2) objected to the drawings; (3) objected to claims 5, 58, 60, 62, 64, 108 and 153 because of informalities; (4) rejected claims 32, 33, 35, 36, 45, 46, 54-65, 94, 96, 97, 99, 103, 106-109, 114, 119, 128-131, 133, 142-144, 148 and 152-153 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite; (5) rejected claims 1, 28-30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 42, 45, 46, 49-51 and 121-128 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,273,634 to Lohbeck ("Lohbeck"); (6) rejected claims 54, 55, 57, 58, 60-62, 65, 103, 108, 129, 131, 148 and 153 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,564,875 to Bullock ("Bullock"); (7) rejected claims 64, 99, 133, 143 and 144 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bullock; (8) rejected claims 106, 107, 151 and 152 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Bullock in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,557,640 to Cook et al. ("Cook"); (9) rejected claims 2-5 and 52 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lohbeck in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,263,968 to Freeman et al. ("Freeman"); (10) rejected claims 25-27, 47 and 48 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lohbeck in view of Cook; (11) rejected claims 54-56, 94, 96, 97, 99, 103, 108, 129, 130, 142, 144, 148 and 153 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lohbeck in view of Bullock; (12) rejected claims 57-64, 109 and 131 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lohbeck in view of Bullock as applied to claim 54, and further in view of Freeman; (13) rejected claims 106, 107, 151 and 152 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lohbeck in view of Bullock as applied to claim 54, and further in view of Cook; and (14) rejected claims 114 and 119 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lohbeck in view of Bullock, also in view of Freeman as applied to claims 57, 109 and 131, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,354,734 to Curran et al. ("Curran"). Applicants respectfully request reconsideration in view of the claim amendments above and the following remarks.

SPECIFICATION OBJECTIONS

The specification has been amended on page 2 of this paper to address the Examiner's various objections. Applicants submit that no new matter has been introduced by these

amendments. Applicants believe that these amendments address the Examiner's specification objections and respectfully request the objections be withdrawn.

DRAWING OBJECTIONS

Applicants believe that the Examiner's drawings objections have been addressed with amendments to the drawings on page 3 of this paper, and the specification amendments.

CLAIM OBJECTIONS

The Examiner's claim objections have been addressed throughout the claims listing.

CLAIM REJECTIONS – 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims rejected under Lohbeck (6,273,634)

Claims 1-53 are canceled.

Claim 121 is amended to include coupling members at the ends of the tubular sleeve, and threadably coupling the first and second tubular members. Lohbeck discloses that its fasteners are disposed through bores in the first and second tubulars, and in bores located in intermediate portions of the tubular sleeve. Further, Lohbeck discloses only that end portions of the tubular members are placed in coaxial proximity to each other, and not threadably coupled. For at least these reasons, claims 121-124 are allowable over the cited art.

Claim 125 includes a fluid tight seal provided by the interface between the tubular sleeve and the ends of the first and second tubular members before, during, and after the radial expansion of the portions of the first and second tubular members. Lohbeck does not disclose such a fluid tight seal. The Examiner cites to a "flush-type connection" in Lohbeck, but it is unclear how this teaches the claimed fluid tight seal before, during and after radial expansion. In fact, as one having ordinary skill in the art would readily recognize, the flush-type connection described by Lohbeck refers to the characteristic that the sleeve is either flush with the outer diameters of the tubulars (Figure 2) or the inner diameters of the tubulars (Figure 3). For at least these reasons, claims 125-128 are allowable over the cited art.

Claims rejected under Bullock (6,564,875)

Claim 54 is amended to include a coupling member engaged between an outer end surface of one of the ends of the tubular sleeve and an outer surface of one of the first and second tubular members. Bullock does not disclose such a coupling member.

Claims 129, 131, 148 and 153 are amended to include that the coupled tubular sleeve and first and second tubular members include a radially expanded and plastically deformed position. Bullock does not teach radial expansion and plastic deformation of the assembly 100. The tubular member 115 and the sleeve 120 are removed before tubular member 110, which may be an expandable member, is expanded. The member 115 and the sleeve 120 are not expanded. See, for example, the process set out in claim 12.

For at least these reasons, claims 54, 55, 56, 58, 60-62, 103, 108, 129, 131, 148 and 153 are allowable over the cited art.

CLAIM REJECTIONS – 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims rejected over Bullock

Claims 64 and 99 depend from claim 54, and therefore are distinguishable from Bullock for at least the same reasons as those given regarding claim 54.

Claims 133, 143 and 144 are amended to include that the coupled tubular sleeve and first and second tubular members include a radially expanded and plastically deformed position. As previously explained, Bullock does not teach radial expansion and plastic deformation of the assembly 100. Only the expandable tubular (member 110) is taught to be expanded.

For at least these reasons, claims 64, 99, 133, 143 and 144 are allowable over the cited art.

Claims rejected over Bullock in view of Cook

Claims 106 and 107 depend from claim 54, and therefore are distinguishable from Bullock for at least the same reasons as those given regarding claim 54.

Claim 151 is amended to include that the coupled tubular sleeve and first and second tubular members include a radially expanded and plastically deformed position wherein the first and second tubular members are amorphously bonded. Claim 152 is amended to include that the coupled tubular sleeve and first and second tubular members include a radially expanded and plastically deformed position wherein the first and second tubular members are welded. As previously explained, Bullock does not teach radial expansion and plastic deformation of the assembly 100. Only the expandable tubular (member 110) is taught to be expanded. Further, while Cook teaches bonding or welding a sealing head to a mandrel, Cook does not teach that

tubular members are bonded or welded in a radially expanded and plastically deformed sleeve and tubular member assembly as claimed.

For at least these reasons, claims 106, 107, 151 and 152 are allowable over the cited art.

Claims rejected over Lohbeck in view of Bullock

Claim 54 is amended to include a coupling member engaged between an outer end surface of one of the ends of the tubular sleeve and an outer surface of one of the first and second tubular members. As previously explained, neither Lohbeck nor Bullock disclose such a coupling member.

With respect to claims 129, 130, 142, 144, 148 and 153, the coupled tubular sleeve and tubular members include a radially expanded and plastically deformed position. The combination of Lohbeck and Bullock simply does not teach radially expanding and plastically deforming a tubular sleeve coupled to two tubular members, wherein the two tubular members are threadably coupled to each other. As previously explained, Bullock teaches one expandable member, while the sleeve and second tubular are merely protectors that are removed before expansion of the expandable member. Thus, the cited combination does not reasonably disclose to one having ordinary skill in the art a radially expanded and plastically deformed connection including threadably coupled tubular members with a tubular sleeve attached thereto.

For at least these reasons, claims 54-56, 94, 96, 97, 99, 103, 108, 129, 130, 142, 144, 148 and 153 are allowable over the cited art.

Claims rejected over Lohbeck in view of Bullock further in view of Freeman

As noted above, claim 54 is not obvious over Lohbeck in view of Bullock. Thus, this base combination does not render obvious the dependent claims 57-64 for at least the same reason.

Claim 109 is amended to include that the tubular sleeve and the first and second tubular members are radially expanded and plastically deformed placing: the tubular sleeve in circumferential tension, the end of first tubular member in circumferential compression, and the end of the second tubular member in circumferential compression. As already explained herein, the cited combination does not teach a radially expanded and plastically deformed coupling of a tubular sleeve and threadably coupled tubular members. The same reasoning applies to claim 131.

For at least these reasons, claims 57-64, 109 and 131 are allowable over the cited art.

Claims rejected over Lohbeck in view of Bullock further in view of Cook

As noted above, claim 54 is not obvious over Lohbeck in view of Bullock. Thus, this base combination does not render obvious the dependent claims 106 and 107 for at least the same reason. Further, the added features of claims 106 and 107, in combination with claim 54, are not taught by the cited combination for the reasons stated elsewhere herein.

Similarly, amended claims 151 and 152 are distinguished over the cited combination for the reasons made clear already. For at least these reasons, claims 106, 107, 151 and 152 are allowable over the cited art.

Claims rejected over Lohbeck in view of Bullock in view of Freeman further in view of Curran

Claims 114 and 119 are canceled.

NEW CLAIMS

Method claims 154-163 are added to replace the canceled method claims 1-53 and more accurately reflect the claimed subject matter in view of the present amendment. Consideration of these claims is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. No new matter is introduced by way of amendment. In the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a), and any fees required are hereby authorized to be charged to USPTO Deposit Account Number 03-2769 (2725-09305).

Respectfully submitted,

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